

First Sunday of Advent – C  
Fr. Chad S. Green  
Holy Family Catholic Church  
Kirkland, Washington  
2 December 2018

Jeremiah 33:14-16  
Psalm 25  
1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2  
(Psalm 85:8) Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

*Come, Lord Jesus!*

*Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy...and that day catch you by surprise like a trap.*<sup>1</sup>

+++

It seems that each year, the First Sunday of Advent catches me by *surprise*. Not only that I can't believe it's already December. Or that it's now only three weeks until Christmas. But, even more, the *readings* for the First Sunday of Advent always seem to catch me by surprise. When I'm getting ready for the beginning of Advent, I'm just not expecting readings about our need to be prepared for the *End Times*.

Maybe it's the advertisements and sales going on around us. Maybe it's the lights and decorations we see popping up. Or, maybe it's my own fault for cheating and listening to the radio stations that have been playing Christmas music *since the middle of November – a full week before Thanksgiving Day!*

I admit that, here on the First Sunday of Advent, my mind and my heart have already started to jump ahead to the peace and joy that awaits us on Christmas Day. Yet today's readings are so different from where my heart and my thoughts are at: The End Times...signs in the sun, moon, and stars...people dying of fright...tribulations...<sup>2</sup> *What do these things have to do with the peace and joy of Christmas that we are preparing for?*

+++

The First Sunday of Advent, then, is a reminder for me – a reminder for *all of us* – of the important purpose of Advent. That Advent is not only for preparing for Christ to come with peace and joy as a Baby at Christmas. The purpose of Advent is that, by preparing for Christ to come at Christmas, we prepare ourselves for Christ to come *again* at the End of Time.<sup>3</sup>

We do this in Advent by doing things that help us grow in *Faith* and *Hope*.

*Faith*<sup>4</sup>: Believing that the Baby born at Christmas is the Savior of the World. That the Baby born at Christmas shows us that God is always with us.<sup>5</sup>

*Hope*<sup>6</sup>: Trusting in God's Promise to give us eternal life through that Baby born at Christmas. That because God is always with us, we can be vigilant, we can be strong, and we can see that "our redemption is at hand."<sup>7</sup>

+++

Okay, so how do we do that? How does preparing for Christmas help us prepare for the End of Time? Because it's one thing to prepare for Christmas. We know what happened at Christmas; we know what to expect; we know how to celebrate it; we know what it looks like; and we even know when it's going to happen. We have only a little more than three weeks of being vigilant for Christmas. It can be stressful, but we can get through it, right?

But how do we remain vigilant for the Second Coming of Christ? How do we stay vigilant for something that we don't know what to expect; or what it will look like; or when it will happen? How do we prepare for something like that?

+++

We do that by preparing for Christ to come *every day*. Not just Christmas Day. Not just each day of Advent. Be prepared for Christ to come *every day*. You've all probably heard the

phrase: “Live each day like it’s your last.”<sup>8</sup> That can be helpful and inspiring in some ways, but is that really possible?

Because we still have to live the ordinariness of each day: going to work; going to school; doing homework; cleaning the house; paying the bills. If today was truly our last day, then a lot of those things wouldn’t matter anymore – and we might not do them. So, let’s be clear: Kids, you still have to go to school tomorrow; and, Adults, you still have to go to work and take care of your household tomorrow.

+++

So, how do we live each day with *vigilance* and *preparedness* amidst the ordinariness of life? How do we *raise our heads* to God when there’s so much going on down here to take care of? How do we keep our *hearts from becoming drowsy* from life’s anxieties? How do we pray for *strength* to stand before God?<sup>9</sup>

One of the best ways we can do these things is to rely on the Sacraments to *prepare* us and make us *vigilant*. The Sacraments *raise our heads* to God and *lift our hearts* up to the Lord.<sup>10</sup> The Sacraments give us *strength*.<sup>11</sup>

The Sacraments are a tangible gift that Jesus Christ left us, so that we can be sure that His Love and Mercy are *always* with us.<sup>12</sup> So that we can recognize that Christ didn’t only come at Christmas. That He won’t only come at the End of Time. That Christ comes to us *every day*.

My friends, the best way to be prepared for Christ to come *any day* – is to recognize that He comes to us *every day*.

+++

Sometime during Advent, please make a good Confession. Our Advent Penance Service is this Wednesday evening, with seven priests coming to hear Confessions. Or come to any of

our regular Confession times during the week. In Confession we experience God's Love and Mercy and fight back against the things that keep our *heads down*, that make our *hearts drowsy*, that take away our *strength*.<sup>13</sup>

Most importantly, during Advent, come to Mass every Sunday – and during the week, if possible. In the Mass, we most clearly see that Christ comes to us *every day*. When we gather as the Body of Christ at Mass and pray, *Come, Lord Jesus!* He comes to us in our neighbor. When we pray, *Come, Lord Jesus!* in the Mass, He comes to us in His Word, reminding us of His Promise to save us from anything in the world that seems to be assaulting us. When we pray, *Come, Lord Jesus!* in the Mass, He comes to us in the Eucharist, in which He is truly Present with His Body and Blood to nourish us and strengthen us.<sup>14</sup>

When we go forth from Mass<sup>15</sup> – back into the ordinariness of our daily life – our *heads* and *hearts* are lifted up to the Lord; we are *strengthened* to face the *tribulations* of the world; and when we pray that ancient prayer, *Come, Lord Jesus!* – we are not *surprised* that He truly comes!<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Luke 21:34-35

<sup>2</sup> See Luke 21:25, 26, 36

<sup>3</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 524: “When the Church celebrates *the liturgy of Advent* each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming.”

<sup>4</sup> *CCC Glossary*: “FAITH: Both a gift of God and a human act by which the believer gives personal adherence to God who invites his response, and freely assents to the whole truth that God has revealed. It is this revelation of God which the Church proposes for our belief, and which we profess in the Creed, celebrate in the sacraments, live by right conduct that fulfills the twofold commandment of charity (as specified in the ten commandments), and respond to in our prayer of faith. Faith is both a theological virtue given by God as grace, and an obligation which flows from the first commandment of God (26, 142, 150, 1814, 2087).”

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 1:23: “‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,’ which means ‘God is with us.’”

<sup>6</sup> *CCC Glossary*: “HOPE: The theological virtue by which we desire and expect from God both eternal life and the grace we need to attain it (1817).”

<sup>7</sup> Luke 21:36, 28

<sup>8</sup> Laurie Brink, OP and Paul A. Colloton, OSFS, “First Sunday of Advent: Reflecting on the Word” in *Living the Word: Scripture Reflections and Commentaries for Sundays and Holy Days – Year C*: “St Francis de Sales advises us to live each day as if it were our last, to which I add, because it might be!”

<sup>9</sup> See Luke 21:28, 34, 36

<sup>10</sup> See Luke 21:28, 34 and Psalm 25:1: “To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.”

---

Also see “The Eucharistic Prayer” in the *Roman Missal* 31: “V. Lift up your hearts. R. We lift them up to the Lord.”

<sup>11</sup> See Luke 21:36 and 1 Thessalonians 3:13

<sup>12</sup> Gospel Acclamation (Psalm 85:8): “Show us, Lord, your love; and grant us your salvation.”

<sup>13</sup> See Luke 21:28, 34, 36

<sup>14</sup> See *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7: “...Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations.”

<sup>15</sup> See “The Concluding Rites” in the *Roman Missal* 144: “V. Go forth, the Mass is ended. R. Thanks be to God.”

<sup>16</sup> See Revelation 22:20: “‘Yes, I am coming soon.’ Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!”

CCC 671: “That is why Christians pray, above all in the Eucharist, to hasten Christ’s return by saying to him: *Marana tha!* ‘Our Lord, come!’”

CCC 1403: “Whenever the Church celebrates the Eucharist she remembers this promise and turns her gaze ‘to him who is to come.’ In her prayer she calls for his coming: ‘*Marana tha!*’ ‘Come, Lord Jesus!’ ‘May your grace come and this world pass away!’”